

Editor's Letter

Back to Basics: Who Needs a Data Warehouse?

The rationale behind whether or not a Data Warehouse is required is often based upon the secondary benefits that the Business Intelligence Solution delivers – A Data Warehouse does not “decrease the speed at which decisions are made” or “deliver business insight”.

If the ultimate aim is to achieve the benefits of pervasive information across the organisation – giving all employees the right information, to make informed decisions – there are some simple criteria by which to test whether a Data Warehouse is necessary.

Combining data from multiple applications for reporting

Traditionally, organisations with multiple operational applications (Finance, Order Processing, CRM etc) have solved the problem of data integration through complex data extracts and manual data de-duplication. As data volumes have grown exponentially, these processes have struggled to keep pace and deliver against business’ demands.

The Data Warehouse solves this by automating the process of data extract, transformation, integration and error resolution.



To reduce the IT burden and empower business users to answer questions

The Business Intelligence toolset enables users to build and schedule their own reports and queries without referring them to the IT department. The Data Warehouse removes the need for them to perform data extraction, manual integration and de-duplication exercises.

Time based analysis and long term information storage

Best-practice analysis necessitates the ability to report performance over time (year on year, Q1 vs Q2 etc). The functions of transactional systems often mean this data is not retained to avoid operational system lag, or because it is overwritten as operational facts change. The Data Warehouse enables this information to be retained for time based analysis. Equally, “slowly changing dimensions” can be preserved – for example, employment status: Full time, part time, contractor.

To alleviate the burden on transactional systems

Reporting applications perform notoriously intensive processes which often reduce the response times of operational applications. Automating the extraction of data from operational systems at a time which minimises operational system impacts, and placing the burden of reporting on separate infrastructure (servers and disks) eliminates this problem.

Server technologies employed to produce quick reporting solutions may also hinder transactional application performance, such as star schemas bit-mapped indexing. Keeping these separate mitigates this.

Data cleansing and Meta Data management

The processes by which data is extracted, transformed and loaded (ETL) into the Data Warehouse, and the technical tools that report on error corrections and ensure consistent business terminology, deliver one trusted repository for business information.

To streamline future reporting application delivery

The Data Warehouse streamlines the introduction of new data feeds, and allows for multiple “views” or universes to be created for specific business communities.

Information on demand

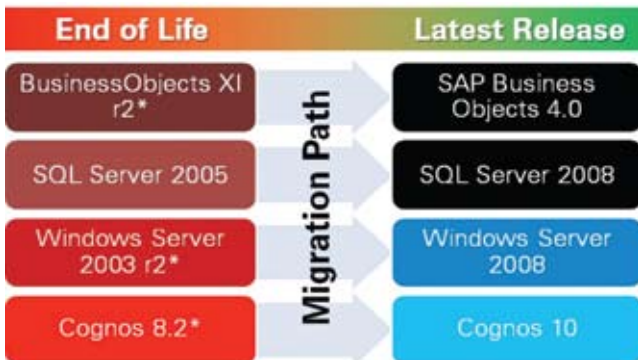
Web delivery driven information “On-Demand” allows organisations to extend the reach of reporting quickly, safely and efficiently.

To automate the delivery of a best-practice Data Warehouse, **visualmetrics** has developed the **visualintegrator** toolkit which reduces the timescale and mitigates the risks of Data Warehouse development.

Find out more: www.visualmetrics.co.uk/visualintegrator T: (0)870 760 6467

Is it time to migrate?

The decision to migrate from an older release of a given software to a newer upgraded platform is often driven simply by the requirement to ensure on-going software support for business continuity. Whilst ensuring on-going support and maintenance is essential, it is by no means the only contributing factor, and to overlook those other drivers risks the opportunity to maximise their benefits:



*including all previous releases.

- 1. Software Support:** As discussed, ensuring on-going support and maintenance
- 2. Data Integration:** The opportunity to introduce new data feeds, or streamline data integration.
- 3. Data Integrity:** A chance to interrogate those factors which may decrease the data's validity, and utilise new tools and techniques to ensure future improvements.
- 4. Functional Enhancements:** What functionality or uses of the product could help drive more value from the investment, and more value into the solution?
- 5. Product Enhancements:** New tools included within the latest release that deliver benefit.
- 6. Compliance:** Compliance factors often place requirements on organisations to ensure supported software, a particular technology, or specific outputs.

7. Standardisation: Standardising software across core applications can bring extra functionality, or decreased costs.

8. Scalability: The need to increase user access to the system, which the current release/platform has not been able to.

The focus on, and sponsorship of, the planned migration gifts the chance to increase the adoption of the application and ensure employees have the necessary skills to take advantage of it.

To ensure a successful application migration at both a business and technical level, **visualmetrics** offers its **visualmigration** service. This service covers the entire scope of any migration programme: www.visualmetrics.co.uk/visualmigration

Cognos 10 and BusinessObjects 4.0



New releases, new tools, new functionality: A bullet point list of updates.

Cognos 10:

- 1. Self Service Interface:** Redesigned and more intuitive BI workspace and cross product user interface.
- 2. Collaboration:** New functionality to enable greater collaborative analysis and social networking.
- 3. Information Anywhere:** Improved mobile integration and real-time analytics to enable decreased time to decision.
- 4. Dashboards & Charting:** New charting engine, delivering stunning new visualisations and report connectivity.

BusinessObjects 4.0:

- 1. In-Memory Computing:** Through the SAP High Performance Analytic Appliance (HANA), SAP says this feature allows users to quickly analyse huge loads of information and return queries "at the speed of thought".
- 2. Mobile BI on any Device:** Using its Sybase Unwired Platform to give users a "comprehensive mobile BI suite."
- 3. Business and Social Data Analysis:** A new semantic layer and common authoring toolset will simplify ad hoc analysis.
- 4. Enhanced Integration into BW:** Includes streamlined integration of Beca queries into BusinessObjects, enabling organisations to preserve current investments.

New Starter: Steve Whitehead

visualmetrics are delighted to welcome Steve Whitehead to our growing **visualassurance** support team. Steve brings with him a wealth of experience having supported the software applications and processes of one of the UK's leading banks for the last 15 years. His focus will be to

assist customers through the delivery of support services and account management:

Steve is a dedicated and diligent professional, a critical problem solver and experienced leader. His spare time he spends playing music and watching Liverpool (so he's a good lad in our books!).

We hope you will find Steve a helpful and knowledgeable resource in the provision of support services.

For more information on **visualassurance** service options, please visit www.visualmetrics.co.uk/visualassurance





Is Mobile Ready for you?

In the fourth quarter of 2010, smartphone shipments (100.9 million) surpassed PC shipments (92.1 million) for the first time, with the European and US markets leading the way in both adoption and consumption. Whilst backroom debates on PC Vs Smartphone “life expectancy,” and “trend Vs fad,” will continue to rage in the back office and down the pub, the sheer volume is indicative of a growing demand for information on the move.

Early forays by Business Intelligence vendors into meeting the demand for business performance information at the birth of the smart phone boom were – and lets be critical – dissatisfactory. The infancy on the hardware, the swiftness of vendors to react and the uncharted users requirements at this stage, meant software solutions merely disseminated a skimmed version of the same information, without the necessary functionality to meet the business’ needs – we’ve all been sat in the pub and watched someone bring up their fifty-tab, five thousand row, Excel spreadsheet, and extol the virtues of their latest phone, only to realise it’s completely illegible, unusable and serves no practical business purpose.

Well thankfully that’s changed, in a big way. The hardware’s more powerful; the UI streamlined; the connection improved; user requirements better defined through time, and this has enabled technology vendors to deliver tools for mobile users with functionality that PCs now can’t deliver.

Traditional reporting and ad-hoc query tools, such as IBM Cognos Go! Mobile and SAP BusinessObjects BI Mobile, now deliver the same instant information (reports, alerts, analysis and dashboards) as PCs, but anytime, anywhere and via touch screen, enabling faster time to decision. Alongside these, OLAP tools like SAP BusinessObjects Explorer enable powerful data exploration from the pocket.

All of these tools have now been integrated into their respective product platforms, can be delivered at a price that drives a return on investment and have simplified support, reducing the burden on the IT department.

The functionality:

- Get critical reports & information on your mobile device – Take BI on the road and let any user get personalised information from their mobile.
- Slice & Dice, OLAP analysis and critical alerts on the go.
- Informed decisions – Your users can update information and trigger actions from mobile devices based on calls, SMS texts, or e-mail messages.

What’s in the package?

visualmetrics Mobile BI Starter Pack is a cost effective way to begin to deliver Business Intelligence capabilities to your employees via mobile:

- Business Objects Explorer, BI Mobile or Cognos Go! Mobile user licenses.
- Mobile data integration & user configuration consultancy service.
- User training.

For more information: visit www.visualmetrics.co.uk/BI-Mobile where you can download overviews or watch product demos, or call us on (0)870 7606467.

New Customers on Support

We’d like to welcome the following customers, who have chosen to either join, or significantly expand their existing, **visualassurance** support service.

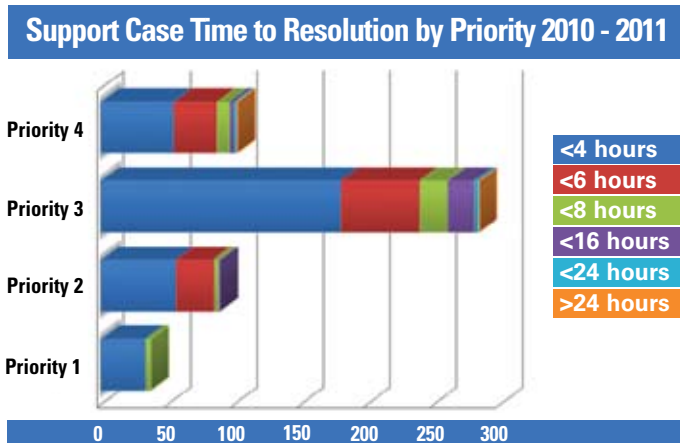


visualassurance

Enhancements

Over the last twelve months, we have heavily invested in increasing the support services we are able to offer to our customers. We are all aware of the business impact a technical problem can promote and we continually evaluate our services to ensure we maximise any opportunity to deliver increased continuity for our customers. Of a series of service enhancements, we are pleased to announce significant updates to our online support portal, which is enabling **visualassurance** customers to decrease the time it takes to log, monitor and receive updates on call status.

Whilst all the ancillary services we provide as part of our support package are what helps our customers maximize the return from their investments, "break fix" will always remain the fundamental measure of our success.



If you don't currently have access to the support portal, please contact our support team: (0)870 7606467 and choose option 4.

Our Business Partners

To achieve the business objectives of being a premier organisation in the delivery of Analytical Applications which derive business value for its clients, **visualmetrics** recognises the need to have a range of business partners who fall into three distinct categories:

PRODUCT PARTNERS who develop industry leading BI tools & BI suites. These are core components of the applications which **visualmetrics** already has, or will develop for custom specific reasons.



Silwood Technology Limited



APPLICATION PARTNERS who have market leading operational applications in chosen business sectors & operational areas. Their clients have requirements for information analysis, which is satisfied by the applications and consulting services of **visualmetrics**.



SERVICE PARTNERS who are recognised industry experts in management consulting and technical consulting areas.



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